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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the emerging nature of teacher voice in educational change, this ethnographic study examined the process of teacher-initiated change through collaborative research in an elementary school. Four elementary school teachers, their principal, and a university professor were involved in the research. Qualitative data was collected through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, document analysis, and dialogue journals. Findings are presented as assertions supported with excerpts from the collected data (conversation transcripts, field notes, dialogue journal entries, etc.). The first assertion states that a culture of seclusion and isolation has contained teachers' voices within their classrooms, and that teachers yearn for professional opportunities to make their voices heard. The second assertion states that the creation of a culture for change begins with the establishment of a culture of collegiality and caring. Such a culture may be fostered by the creation of professional opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue and construct knowledge with peers. Contains 35 references. (MM)

Teachers for Change: An Elementary School Collaborative Program for Enhancing School Climate

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Teachers for Change: An Elementary School Collaborative Program for Enhancing School Climate

Creating and sustaining educational change continues to be a concern for practitioners and researchers in the field of education (Bacharach, 1990; Culver & Hoban, 1973; Fullan, 1982, 1991; Goodlad, 1975). Recently, practitioners and researchers have joined together to affect educational change. In contrast to previous attempts at school change, collaborative endeavors have had promising results (Gitlin, 1990; Miller, 1990).

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of teacher initiated change through collaborative research in one elementary school. The emerging nature of teacher voice in educational change became the focus of this study. Following an overview of literature on teacher voice and teacher initiated change, the methodology of this collaborative research project, two assertions constituting grounded theory, and implications and conclusions are reported through narratives of the researcher's and practitioners' experiences.

According to Witherell and Noddings (1991), stories in educational research "offer us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and being known" (p. 1). As such, the assertions and conclusions unfold in the context of two narratives—that of the practitioner and that of the researcher. The two narratives "become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5).

The Voice Metaphor

Stimulated largely by the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), many educational researchers are making sense of educational practices through the use of metaphor (e.g., Marshall, 1988; 1990a; 1990b). The metaphor of voice, prevalent in the feminist literature, (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1977; 1979; 1982) has been adopted by some educational theorists as a way to understand schooling.

The use of the voice metaphor in feminist theory can be largely attributed to the groundbreaking work on moral and psychological development completed by Carol Gilligan. Gilligan (1982) asserted that the theory of morality grounded in the work of Kohlberg (1981; 1984) presented a narrow view of morality for numerous reasons: (a) The theories were based solely on a component of justice; (b) Kohlberg selected only male subjects to develop his theory; and (c) The measurement of moral judgments were based on hypothetical situations that presented only a limited number of options for resolution (Scott, 1987). From Gilligan's interviews and analyses of the stories women told of the resolutions of personal real life moral dilemmas, we learned that women speak "in a different voice," that is, a voice of care, responsibility, and connectedness.

Following Gilligan's work on women's moral development, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) studied female epistemology and development. From in-depth life history interviews of 135 woman, Belenky and her coauthors concluded that "women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined" (p. 18). Belenky and her coauthors categorized women's perspectives on knowing into five major epistemological classifications:

> *Silence*, a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority; *received knowledge*, a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own;

> *subjective knowledge*, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited; *procedural knowledge*, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and *constructed knowledge*, a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. (p. 15)

In the critical education literature, the voice metaphor has been employed to convey historical instances of domination and oppression (evidenced by the silencing of teachers) and the political actions taken by individuals in order to express opinions and overcome domination and control (evidenced by the finding and gaining of teacher voice). For example, the work of Gitlin (1990) attempts to develop "teacher voice" as a political form of protest to enable school change. He proposes and begins to explore the use of "educative research" based on the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986). Educative research fosters a form of research that "gives a say to practitioners" and "exposes some of the myths surrounding scientific research" (p. 447).

Gitlin began his first attempt with a group of twenty of his students in the Cooperative Master's Program at the University of Utah. He focused the theme of his course on an educative research project where teachers were instructed to write a school history to identify school structures, read critical education theory literature such as Eisner's (1979) The Education Imagination, and Apple's (1986) Teachers and Text, write personal school histories to explore the self, and pose any question they wanted to pursue through a dialogical model. Although Gitlin made great strides towards giving teachers voice in educational research, he reports that

> . . . teachers really didn't have a choice. I had used my privileged position to structure the experience and in so doing, lost an opportunity to challenge the dominant relationship between researcher and practitioner. (p. 450)

He concluded that even for teachers who did begin to find their voices, there was "no structure in place at the school level that would allow their voices to be heard" (p. 465).

The work of Miller (1990) carried these ideas one step further. Miller attempted to create a space where the voices of teachers could be heard. In the role of university professor, Miller extended an invitation to five educators to work together by developing a collaborative teacher-researcher project. Through her collaborative work with these teachers, Miller reported that the teachers and she were able to "share the constantly emerging and changing nature of [their] voices" (p. 7).

Miller shared the stories of this collaboration in Creating Spaces and Finding Voices: Teachers Collaborating for Empowerment. Although collaborative research became "the space" for these teachers and a university professor to find their voices, this collaborative group realized that "teacher's voices, in all their similarities and differences, still are not heard in the clamor of educational reform and in agendas for research on teachers' knowledge" (p. xi). Perhaps "creating spaces" and "finding voices" must occur in the context of teacher initiated change and school reform, for it is only then that a school structure allowing for teacher voice to be heard can be created and sustained.

Teacher Change and School Reform Initiated from Within

Barth (1990) believes that only practitioners inside the school have the power to initiate successful change and improvement. "School," Barth writes, "is four walls surrounding a future" (p. 158). The quality of what goes on within those four walls "will increase dramatically when, and if those who work in schools—teachers, students, parents and administrators—come in touch with one another, with their personal visions, and with the way they would like their schools to be,

and then take deliberate action to move toward them" (p. 158). Barth contends that "only changes emanating and sustained from within are likely to bring lasting improvement to our schools" (p. xv). In essence, Barth has made a plea for teachers to find their voices and discover the power in those voices to initiate and sustain educational change.

This study of school and teacher change was initiated by the voices of teachers. Following an inservice workshop in the summer of 1990, four elementary school teachers approached me to assist in the process of school and teacher change. The opportunity to study school change initiated from within the four walls of the school was intriguing, as I was already free from the "structured experience" that "oppressed" and "silenced" teachers (Gitlin, 1990). Furthermore, Miller's assertion that "teachers voices are not heard in the clamor of education reform" would be challenged by a school reform effort initiated by teachers. Therefore, on a rainy Friday afternoon in September of 1990, four teachers and their principal, who strongly supported teacher and school change, met with me to discuss the possibilities before us. A year long ethnography of Southside Elementary School's change process was begun. (For a full report of this study, please see Dana, 1991).

Methodology

As teachers were the initiators for this study, the research focused on the concerns of the teachers and continually involved them in the design process, data collection, and interpretation. Termed "action research" by Carr and Kemmis (1986), this approach to educational research attempts to alter the traditional relationship between the researcher and those studied so that the relationship is no longer alienating and teacher silencing (Gitlin, 1990). Those traditionally studied, teachers, become researchers themselves, and the university researcher's role is "to facilitate the development of teachers' reflective capacities" (Elliot, 1988, p. 164).

The methods employed in our collaborative action research project were interpretive (Erickson 1986), that is, they involved the collection and interpretation of qualitative data through participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, document analysis, and dialogue journals. Our journal writing served as written conversations of our reflections. Following Schön's (1988) theories of reflective coaching, the dialogue journals enabled me to enter into a collaborative process with the teachers creating a "hall of mirrors" to illustrate the process of reflection. Through our writings, both the teachers and myself became "researchers in and on practice whose work depended on [our] collaboration with each other" (Schön, 1988, p. 26).

Following in the traditions of symbolic interactionism (Jacob, 1987), a constructivist epistemology (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsy, 1978) was embodied into my collection and interpretation of data and generation of assertions. Initial research questions, formed as I accepted the invitation extended by these teachers and their principal, were: (a) What changes do these practitioners choose to make,? (b) How do teachers make sense of the change process,? and (c) What is the nature of school and community culture with respect to educational change? Similar to the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) who studied women's experiences and problems as learners and knowers, I had not anticipated that "voice was more than an academic shorthand for a person's point of view" (p.18). As our collaborative research project progressed, it became apparent that teacher change and school change were intricately intertwined with the development of a sense of teacher voice.

Therefore, consistent with the development of teacher voice, I have chosen to present the supporting data for each assertion as stories of these teachers' experiences of change. Although I have attempted to preserve each of these teachers' voices through inclusion of transcribed tape recordings of our conversations and excerpts from our dialogue journals, these stories are still embedded within my story of the emerging nature of our work together:

> One of our tasks in writing narrative accounts is to convey a sense of the complexity of all of the "I's" all of the ways each of us have as knowing. We are, in narrative inquiry, constructing narratives at several levels. At one level it is the personal narratives and the jointly shared and constructed narratives that are told in the research writing, but narrative researchers are compelled to move beyond the telling of the lived story to tell the research story . . . . This telling of the research story requires another voice of researcher, another "I." In this latter endeavor we make our place and our voice as researcher central. We understand this as moving out of the collaborative relationship to a relationship where we speak more clearly with the researcher "I" . . . . Our concern is to have a place for the voice of each participant. The question of who is researcher and who is teacher becomes less important as we concern ourselves with questions of collaboration, trust, and relationship as we live, story, and restory our collaborative research life. Yet in the process of writing the research story, the thread of the research inquiry becomes part of the researcher's purpose. In some ways the researcher moves out of the live story to tell, with another "I," another kind of story. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10)

Subsequently, these teachers' stories are told through my narration and therefore are embedded in my own culture, language, gender, beliefs, and life history as a white middle class woman, former elementary school teacher, and current university researcher interested in constructivism as a way of knowing and critical pedagogy as a way of understanding power and control issues in education.

I continued to collaborate with these teachers during the writing of their stories. Yet, these teachers chose to remain anonymous for the purposes of this research report; subsequently, pseudonyms have been used in the telling of each of their stories.

The following two assertions were generated from this study of teacher and school culture change. The assertions are the product of our year long collaborative inquiry and constitute a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Assertions

Assertion 1: Traditionally, a culture of seclusion and isolation has served to contain teachers' voices within the four walls of their classrooms. Teachers yearn for professional opportunities for their voices to be heard beyond their four walls.

Southside: A culture of isolation and seclusion. During the first phase of this study, I was concerned with learning the salient features of the school culture and beginning our collective inquiry by asking the teachers such questions as: (a) What is most important to you,? (b) What is your definition of change,? (c) What changes do you want to make,? and (d) What is your vision of school change? Following three months of formal and informal interviews and participant observation in classrooms at Southside, one dominant theme emerged. Every teacher spoke of a feeling of isolation, a loss of connectedness with their peers due to growing size of Southside in recent years, and the desire to, in the words of one teacher, "see beyond the four walls of my classroom."

In contrast to a desire to connect with others and engage in dialogue with peers, there existed norms of seclusion and separation embedded in the culture of Southside. Seclusion was suggested by the physical layout of Southside. Each classroom was four walls unto itself. In all but the classrooms in the newer kindergarten and first grade wing and some third grade classrooms, there were no adjoining doors to neighboring classrooms. Some classrooms were even separated from the main building as they were housed in portable temporary buildings. With few exceptions, classroom doors remained closed at all times.

Seclusion was felt at other school locations as well. The faculty lounge was a minute space, four walls constructed of cinder blocks painted stark white, measuring roughly only 8 foot square. Small windows allowed some light into the space, but as they were located just below the ceiling, allowed no one to see out. On frequent occasions, there were not enough chairs to sit faculty members at lunch or on break. Therefore, the one space designated for classroom teachers to come together was too small and uninviting. Consequently, this space was used infrequently by faculty members, often just during their 20 minute lunch period, which always was scheduled with the same grade level.

Following this lunchtime grouping tradition, teachers were isolated from faculty members who taught on grade levels other than their own. Each grade level not only ate lunch together, but was housed in its own wing, and attended special area classes together at approximately the same times each day. Teachers were grouped into teams by grade level, and grade level meetings would often take place when children were at a special area class, or before or after school.

Even when teachers did have an opportunity to converse with peers who taught other grades, most remained close to their grade level cohorts. The norm at faculty meetings was to be seated at a table with others from the same grade level. Few teachers ventured beyond the invisible boundaries which separated each grade. There appeared to be a degree of comfort found in remaining close to those who taught the same level; yet, teachers voiced a dissatisfaction with this comfort. Their vision was to delegitimize the norm of seclusion and separation and legitimize a new norm of collegiality. This change was most welcomed by two of the newest faculty members at Southside—Pam and Kit. Their story describes the socialization of teachers into a culture of isolation and seclusion, a culture that silences teachers voices, and prevents visions of educational change from being implemented.

Socialization into isolation: Pam and Kit's story. Pam and Kit were relatively new to Southside, teaching four years in intermediate grades and two years in primary grades respectively. Their stories evidence the socialization of teachers into a culture of isolation and silence reported by researchers such as Lortie (1975), Britzman (1991), and Kincheloe (1991). Kincheloe (1991) states:

> Teacher education has failed to connect teacher education coursework with the teaching workplace in any more than an obvious, technical way. Devoid of theoretical and analytical frames, young teachers fall easy prey to an unceremonialized initiation into alienation and disillusionment of the . . . teaching workplace. (p. 15)

Pam reflects on her preservice teacher education:

> I heard in college that teachers won't share. If you have a good day you don't tell anybody . . . I was told to be careful when you come in, you know, not to toot your own horn. (Pam Interview, December 19, 1990)

Pam's socialization into the culture continued her first year of teaching at Southside:

> I feel a lot of teachers are not open to having their door open for other teachers. I mean that was the hardest thing for me my first year. When [the principal] was coming in here, there was no problem. But as soon as my peer teacher would walk in here to observe me, I mean, I would be a wreck. And I think it's because they're a teacher . . . that was intimidating . . . . It's funny how people will not share. And if it's good things it sounds like you are bragging and you've got your act together which to me, we need to hear more good things. (Pam, December 19, 1990)

Kit's socialization into the culture of Southside and the culture of teaching was similar to Pam's. Kit tells the story of her first year of teaching where she was shunned from her grade level cohorts for sharing ideas and enthusiasm for teaching:

> Teachers are just so isolated . . . . For one thing, I wasn't accepted at first . . . . [Other teachers on the grade level] thought I was going to outdo them . . . [The principal] spoke very highly of me and they didn't like that at all . . . . He told them that I could teach them so much. No one who's been teaching for 15 years wants to hear that this little bop is going to come in here and teach them anything . . . . They didn't want to have anything to do with me . . . . Excluded me, being nasty to me . . . . So, I just kept to myself. And I was up for [a first year teacher award] and not a single one of them wrote a letter for me . . . . They thought I was bragging. (Kit, Interview Transcription, January 22, 1991)

Kit had not only been socialized into a culture of isolation, but the "grade level" normative structure as well. Kit reflects on her vision for the school:

> I think we need to be more of a unit instead of grade levels. That really bothers me . . . grade levels sticking together. Who cares? You know? Who says that we need to be segregated, and that's the way I see it. Why can't you discuss things with another grade level? Why can't you sit with whoever you want to? . . . . We have to be more open, more willing to discuss things . . . . I don't think you should hide everything. (Kit, Interview Transcription, January 22, 1991)

Kit's questioning of the existing culture challenged the norm that defined her role at Southside. Her questions had led to behaviors that were inconsistent with the norm of isolation and grade level segregation she encountered as a first year teacher. For example, she spoke of grade level seatings at faculty meetings:

> I didn't do that. And they did not like that, and they thought that I was so wrong, because I didn't sit with them, and I thought, I can sit where I want to sit. (Kit, interview transcription, January 22, 1991)

The result for Kit was frustration, anger, and alienation from her grade level peers. She chose to teach a different grade level the following year. Yet, Kit's frustrations carried into her second year of teaching on a different grade level. Following a reading of her January 22 interview transcript on her reflections on her first year of teaching, Kit wrote in her journal:

> I finished reading the transcript . . . . It was funny to read my words . . . . Right now I don't feel like I'm doing a very good job . . . . Throughout the transcript I said "frustrated." I really didn't realize how frustrated I was until I read my own words. Maybe some of those negative vibes are still alive from last year . . . . I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. I feel like it is all my fault, but I know it really can't be. Why am I doubting myself? Is it the lack of support from my peers? Is it the system? Or am I just not a "good" teacher? (Gosh, I'm digging deep into my thoughts). (Kit, Journal Entry, February 5, 1991)

I responded in Kit's journal:

> I'm not sure why you are doubting yourself . . . . There are many questions that I've been wondering about. Probably the best questions are the ones you posed at the end of your last journal entry—Have you thought about these any more or come any closer to finding an answer?

- Why am I doubting myself?
- Is it a lack of support from peers?
- Is it the system?
- Or am I just not a good teacher?

You mentioned you were digging deep into your thoughts—I think that's what is so powerful! It's through "digging deep" and "questioning" that we grow, although "growing" can sometimes be a painful process. (Kit's Journal, Response, February 12, 1991)

That same day, Kit responded to her original questions:

Why am I doubting myself? I don't know exactly . . . . Maybe why I'm doubting myself is the fact that I'm unable to teach how I feel comfortable and this "old way" (. . . No talking or communication with others, book work only, nothing exciting, boring stuff. YUCK!!) is stifling my creativity.

Is it a lack of support from peers? Well, unconsciously it could be . . . . I'm lonely and tired of this portable!

Is it the system? Yes! I'm tired of being treated like I'm worth nothing. I'm not the only one.

Am I not a good teacher? I really and truly believe that I'm a super teacher. Yes I feel that I am an outstanding teacher who is frustrated with many things that are affecting my creativity. (Kit, Journal Entry, February 12, 1991)

For Kit, the culture of isolation continued to cause frustration, resulting in her doubting her non-traditional classroom teaching techniques. In a culture of isolation, it is difficult to change classrooms practices that deviate from the norm (in Kit's words, "the old way of teaching"). In essence, the culture of isolation stifles new classroom practices. Therefore, a prerequisite to changing and sustaining new classroom practices becomes changing the culture to one of collegiality, where peers form partnerships with one another that enable them to look within the four walls of their school for innovative ideas and school improvement. A culture where teachers voice their ideas, value the knowledge created through dialogue with their peers, and act on that knowledge by voicing support for one another can foster changes in both school wide and classroom practices. As evidenced by Kit's story, a culture of isolation can defeat attempts at educational change.

Assertion 2: The creation of a culture for change begins with the establishment of a culture of collegiality and caring. Such a culture may be fostered by the creation of professional opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue and construct knowledge with peers.

Changing the culture: From isolation and seclusion to collegiality and caring. On January 8, 1991, the four original interested teachers and I met. The meeting was also attended by two additional teachers and the principal who had expressed interest in our work and joined in our collaborative effort to make classroom and school changes. I began the meeting by sharing the data (expanded fieldnotes and interview transcriptions) I had collected in the first phase of the study:

I thought I'd start with what I thought is the most interesting because it came out with every single person that I talked to. It is the idea of, and this is in one teacher's words, "seeing beyond the four walls of my classroom . . . . " I guess, I called it when I started marking the data, I called it collegiality. . . . What I want to do is just start with that, and throw it

out and see if this is something that you feel, is this something that you want to look at? (Meeting transcription, January 9, 1991).

The dialogue that transpired following this question indicated that these teachers' feelings of isolation and separation had been silently building within them for years. The question created a space, perhaps for the first time, where teachers could explore the possibilities of a more collegial culture, a culture that encouraged and supported school and classroom improvement. As they brainstormed possibilities, they voiced hopes and dreams of improvements that would occur within the four walls of Southside. These possibilities included observing in others' classrooms and reconceptualizing the faculty meetings. The following quotes, excerpted from that meeting and organized by the two predominant themes, highlight the possibilities discussed:

Observing in Others' Classrooms

Peg: . . . There is the possibility of, like during our planning time, us being able to ask another teacher would it be O.K. if I drop in for 20 minutes today to observe.

Helen: Now if we do that, you would have 36 times a year that you would have the opportunity if you want to.

Sally: Yeah, now what we could do is have a list of all those people who want to get in on it. So that people who are really nervous and awkward about it don't have to.

Pam: Yeah. You don't want to throw this on anybody, I mean, I think it will spread. (General agreement from teachers.) People talking about it. That will naturally get it around.

Helen: I think we've got plenty of teachers who would be excited about this.

Pam: I think it would affect the whole school too. Just seeing what other people are doing, and different styles. When a child comes to you . . . . I can automatically have an image of that teacher. What the child has to adjust to for my style . . . . At least I'd have an understanding and could adjust for them . . . . I think it's something we can learn from each other and I think it will build the school together. Especially for a school that is stretching out so much . . . . I'd like to go to other schools too, I mean I don't think you have to go back to school to get ideas. There are so many good things happening from teachers at all different levels. Here at Southside but also within the county. I would like to go to other places.

Helen: You know, as a person that has an intern, what I would like to do is schedule myself, Peg and I to go to several schools, and then come back and give up our time to release other people to let them go.

Sally: It is good for us to get to other grade levels and experience what that teacher goes through.

Reconceptualizing the Faculty Meeting

Pam: Also sharing. I mean if we could have one person share one idea at every faculty meeting. Stand up. This is what I saw that I liked, at another school, at another classroom. This is working really great for me. I mean if somebody has a great discipline system and it's working, you know, How?

Helen: You could share whatever. You could share something you were doing or something that was happening.

Nancy: Along with faculty meetings, here's an idea that I was thinking about. Maybe we could have a faculty meeting . . . basically the way we teach kids, you know, cooperative learning . . . . You have groups where you are mixed up in grade levels and the idea is that you take 2-5 minutes to share an idea that you use with your classroom.

Helen: We could have cooperative learning groups in the faculty.

Sally: We could pick a subject for the day. You know . . . to give people ideas.

Peg: You know, the topics, generally could change all along. We could have, "Come in with something that you normally teach you think is going to be boring with the kids, and you found something that works that is exciting. Come in with something exciting." You know, it doesn't have to be reading or math.

Principal: You know that works not only for you all but it works for speech, it works for Chapter I, it works for physical education. And we have to keep that in mind too.

Helen: I think that the faculty meeting would be a good way to introduce it to the whole group.

Peg: When we call the faculty meeting, we will need a set of instructions for the faculty. You come with an idea from your classroom . . . . I think the really important factor there is getting all grade levels represented in the group and not one grade level in a group. We could have groups of maybe 3 or 4 . . . . We don't have to go into how [the faculty] is going to be divided up but I think it should be explained to them that we are going to have groups.

Sally: Heterogeneous.

Peg: Heterogeneous meaning that you will not be all with third grade.

Pat: Could we rotate groups?

Peg: Oh, I think we should. Maybe every 2 or 3 times.

Nancy: Do we have a date we want to shoot for for one of these meetings, or do we want to meet again?

Pat: We need to tell the faculty.

Principal: Next time we could meet together would be the 24th. Two weeks from Thursday . . . . I would love to be able to devote 15 minutes at the beginning to some idea sharing and keep the meeting short enough that we could do that and still deal with whatever business to get out at a decent time, but to be able to start with some idea sharing on that day.

Sally: I would like for Ted [the principal] not to do it because this will not be a test. I don't want any teacher to think that they are going to get observed or evaluated.

Peg: Yeah. (General agreement from teachers.)

Sally: Like to introduce it this Thursday, I would like some teacher to do it.

Peg: I will. Yeah, I'll do that.

At this time, I no longer could discern the audiotape of our meeting as a chorus of spontaneous voices broke into separate conversations. In some conversations, the teachers already began to share ideas and materials with each other. Another conversation produced the logistics of that next faculty meeting where the ideas that were voiced would be reported to the faculty by Peg and Sally. From the excitement expressed through the teachers' dialogues that were transpiring, it appeared that the groundwork for building a culture of collegiality and caring was in place. As evidenced by interview data and reflection on that data at this meeting, at this time, the teachers wished to focus their change efforts on the school culture rather than on their individual classroom practices. The importance of a culture of collegiality has been well documented by educational theorists such as Little (1981), Lieberman (1988), Joyce (1990) and Barth (1990). The teachers' visions of culture change further support these theorists and Barth's assertion that:

> . . . the problem of how to change things from "I" to "we," of how to bring a good measure of collegiality and relatedness to adults who work in schools, is one that belongs on the national agenda of school improvement—at the top. It belongs at the top because the relationships among adults in schools are the basis, the precondition, the *sine qua non* that allow, energize, and sustain all other attempts at school improvement. Unless adults talk with one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change. (p. 32)

The emerging nature of teacher voice. From that day of our January meeting forward, these teachers' voices grew louder, and often resonated with a sense of purpose and adventure. On January 10, Ted had given Peg a slot on the faculty meeting agenda entitled "Sharing Ideas of Excellence." At that meeting Peg reported:

> Tuesday afternoon, some of the teachers who have been meeting and working with Nancy Dana met again with Nancy and she was going over with us, she has been interviewing several of us here at Southside, and doing a lot of talking with us, and it was kind of interesting to hear the results . . . . She was telling us that the simple thread of all the interviews that she got seemed to be that . . . most of us missed time to just talk with other teachers, not so much on our grade levels, because we see them at break time, and at our meetings, but throughout other grades and special areas. And so we were saying that we would like to take about 5 to 10 minutes at certain faculty meetings for a little bit of sharing in heterogeneous groups . . . and we are going to do this on the 24th of this month . . . . At the January 24th faculty meeting, come with an idea of something you have presented to your class that you thought was routine, or in other words, maybe dull or boring, but it really turned kids on. That could be language, reading, math, whatever, verbs, adding and subtracting something that was just pretty routine but all of the sudden this neat idea popped up and the kids got very excited about it.

Sally continued:

> Along with what Peg was saying, one of the other things we came up with at the meeting is that we really wanted a chance to get around and see the neat things that all of us, the faculty are doing in their classrooms. So we have a little survey for you to turn in tomorrow, if you are interested in going to somebody else's room in this school at some time, you might go during you planning time or you might trade with somebody so that they teach your class or you teach theirs . . . . But we could work out all the details later, but this survey is just whether you are interested in observing in another classroom

> sometime during this year. And the second part is, is it O.K. with you if people could come see what's going on in your classroom? (Meeting Transcription, January 10, 1991)

Our research group met again on the sixteenth of January. Sally reported the results of the survey. Twenty-seven out of 34 teachers responding to the survey reported they would like to observe in others' classrooms. Comments on surveys such as one made by a special area teacher confirmed the sense of unspoken isolation that so permeated Southside's culture:

> So glad you are doing this. I would really like to observe across all grade levels. I'm so isolated, that I loose track of what "regular" kids are like and what they do.

Pleased with the results of the survey, the teachers shifted their focus to the ensuing faculty meeting and first day of "sharing." The business of the meeting was to group the faculty into heterogeneous groups. Fifty-two slips of pink paper containing the last name of one faculty member and their grade level or "special area" covered the table. The teachers laughed and joked as they discussed potential group combinations. Their language was filled with numerous references to the metaphor of voice. Comments similar to the following were frequently expressed:

> Put Cathy with Christine. Cathy doesn't talk much. Christine might bring her out.

> Don't put Sue with Barbara. No one else will get a word in edgewise.

These versions of the voice metaphor were indicative of a conscious effort by these teachers to create a space where all teachers could be heard. In so doing, the teachers felt others would begin to feel the sense of empowerment they had begun to experience as they continued to find their voices and challenge the existing school culture.

On the 24th of January, Helen and Peg arranged the media center for the first "sharing session." As faculty entered the media center, they were instructed to find the seat that was labeled with the pink slip of paper containing their name. The introduction of this new ceremony created an uneasiness and tension that was not unexpected:

> People experienced in managing change have come to know that putting aside the old ways needs to be accompanied at times with ceremony and ritual. Even when the old ways are disdained, . . . putting them in the past means letting go of the familiar, which is often difficult for people to do. It is especially so when they are not exactly sure of what the future looks like. (Shanker, 1990b, p. 101)

At this first meeting, some faculty experienced difficulty engaging in dialogue as they found themselves immersed in an unfamiliar setting. Conversations with others not from your grade level had been discouraged by the norm of "grade level seating" at faculty meetings. In many groups, some members remained silent. Peg reflected in her journal:

> Interesting—to say the least. Our sharing session was the first thing on the agenda today. As everyone was seated differently (not in their usual grade level tables), I think they felt a little uncomfortable to begin. They (my group) were hesitant to start, so I jumped in and shared Steven Caney's Invention Book. Carla seemed eager to share two activities. The other two were still reluctant to share, but did ask questions of Carla and me. I'm wondering if these two will be more willing to share next time. (Peg, Journal Entry, January 24, 1991)

With time, the normative structure of the faculty meeting began to change so that teachers felt comfortable voicing their ideas and thoughts. One month later, Peg writes:

> This sharing session was great! My group all came prepared with a "classroom management" tip. The two who were quiet last time were even willing to go first sharing their ideas . . . . The meeting today seemed to have much less tension than the first. Teachers may actually begin to look forward to these sessions! I'm thoroughly enjoying all the neat ideas. (Peg, Journal Entry, February 21, 1991)

The "sharing sessions" evolved into professional discussions of topics as reflected in the faculty meeting agendas the following two months:

> What are your feelings regarding the student excellence activities/events held at Southside this year? (i.e., Science Fair, Language Arts Fair, Carnival, Art Fair, Invention Convention . . .) What are your visions for next year? (Faculty Meeting Agenda, March 21, 1991)

> Developing a Vision for Southside: The Business of Paradigms (Video) by Joel Arthur Barker. Small group discussion to follow the video cassette presentation; each group should identify a scribe to record ideas and comments; these discussion notes will be shared by each group at a faculty meeting next month. (Faculty Meeting Agenda, April 18, 1991)

Small group and large group discussion became the norm. All members of the faculty became involved in these discussions, often characterized by laughter and a new found support for each other. For example, at the March 24 discussion of special programs, one teacher summarized her small group thoughts with the comment, "We thought the art show was out of this world." There was spontaneous applause from the faculty for the art teacher.

The normative structure of the faculty meetings was in the process of being altered in order to create a "place at the school level that would allow for [teachers] voices to be heard" (Gitlin, 1990). With the creation of professional opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue and construct knowledge with peers at faculty meetings, evidence that the culture of isolation was indeed changing to a culture of collegiality continually surfaced throughout the study. Some excerpts indicative of culture change from my fieldnote and journal entries are chronicled below:

> *Personal Journal Entry, January 22, 1991.*
>
> I just returned from Southside, came back to my office and needed to unwind—There are so many wonderful things happening there. Many wonderful stories. I hope I can do them justice. Here's a recap of some of my observations today, along with reflections of "what it all means."
>
> When I arrived this morning, it was teacher planning day—an announcement was made that Pam would describe software: "Children's Writing & Publishing Center." Although I had an appointment with Ted at 9:00, I heard he would be late, so left him a note and went to Pam's room. There were 11 teachers there listening to her explain. All teachers were enthused about this software. Pam commented that she had just "come across it" in the media center. The teachers thanked her for sharing and she commented, "Sure, that's why I'm doing this, because I don't think we know what's in the media center unless we do things like this. And if you find something, share it with me."
>
> Then to Ted's office. I mentioned I was glad he was late as I had an opportunity to go to Pam's workshop. He giggled and said, "You know, it's funny. We didn't plan anything for teachers today and there are more workshops planned than if we did! The teachers did it themselves." As we were speaking, a workshop was occurring in Peg's room on invention convention . . . .

I had lunch with Peg and Helen. They invited me! Great trust building and lovely company!

On my way out of the building, I stopped by and made an appointment with Ted for February 12. I told him how exciting it has been to see what's going on. He commented, "Yeah, sometimes when you just leave things alone they bubble up." We both glanced towards the conference room where Helen, Pam, Kit, and another teacher were planning some school wide events. Pam facilitated this meeting. As a result of our first meeting, Pam decided to get a "school spirit thing" going. This group of teachers were planning to start their own monthly newsletters to organize school theme events.

WOW—the "culture" of Southside is changing. A norm of collegiality is replacing a norm of isolation and individuality. New rituals (teacher planned workshops, school spirit events, teacher authored newsletters) are being introduced by the teachers—interesting.

Kit Interview. January 22, 1991.
Kit: I'm going to start this thing—a monthly theme guide. What theme are you doing this month? And I'm going to take care of it. I'm going to type it. I'm going to do everything, and each teacher could save all of these, and when they wanted to do a theme, they could go to that one teacher and say, "I see that you did this one theme in February. Do you mind if I look through your resources or could you tell me how you started it,?" or whatever. I told Pam about it and she said it was a great idea that I should tell Ted about. I told Ted and he said, "Well, how do you think we could go about doing this?" I said I would take care of it.

Fieldnotes, January 29, 1991.
This afternoon I "hung out" in the hallways of Southside so that I could chat with some teachers about yesterday's faculty meeting, particularly the first "sharing session" that members of our research group had planned. One teacher commented: "I found it interesting because there was someone in my group that I was trying to learn to appreciate. Her teaching style is not one that I agree with, and this person did share. Of course she apologized through the whole thing, but she *shared*, something she normally wouldn't do. And I saw her taking notes so she was going to go back to her room and try some of the other ideas that were shared. That was the best part of the meeting. We need to do more of that."

Fieldnotes from School Improvement Team Meeting, February 25, 1991.
Today the School Improvement Team met to assess needs for the 1991—1992 school year. "To increase periodic grade level and cross grade level faculty meetings to improve instruction," was an objective that was discussed.

Summary from Fieldnotes and Personal Journal Entry, March 21, 1991.
Peg volunteered to facilitate discussion at the faculty meeting today. Peg decided to have small groups discuss special programs at Southside and then come back and have a large group discussion with a spokesperson from each group. Peg and Helen set up the faculty meeting with "new groups." As people entered, some questioned "What are we sharing today"? The most heard comment was "Are we in new groups"? Faculty seemed to find their seats and "new groups" with relative ease. The pre-faculty meeting chatting was at a normal level, in contrast to the very first sharing faculty meeting, where there appeared to be an uncomfortable "tension" in the air. The large group discussion was very positive, with many groups offering new ideas for programs. Whenever a teacher offered a new idea, Peg would joke, "O.K., we'll put your name down for coordinator for that project next year." The entire faculty would laugh.

Additionally, faculty began to talk to one another in the large group sessions, offering praise such as, "That's a great idea," or elaborating and further brainstorming "small group" ideas that were presented. One group reported that "We thought the art show was out of this world." There was spontaneous applause from the faculty for the art teacher.

The last item on the agenda was "Plans for New Construction." Ted explained the blueprints for a new "teacher's lounge" that would be built this summer. He asked teachers to look the plans over and make recommendations.

After the faculty meeting was over, on my drive back to campus, many thoughts were racing through my head. Again, I felt an excitement. I think everyone on the faculty felt like they were having a "voice." This was definitely a teacher centered aspect of the meeting. I'm wondering what the next direction will be.

Summary from Fieldnotes, May 8, 1991.

Today Helen and Ted both expressed their excitement to me about a program they were interested in implementing at Southside next year, called "Cooperative Consultation." In this program, "special area teachers" do not "pull children out" of the regular classroom. Rather, "special area teachers" work cooperatively with classroom teachers and come inside their classroom, "their four walls," to work with special needs students, and other children in the classroom as well. They both said that they see a direct relation between this program and what our research group has been trying to do this year.

Group Meeting Transcription, May 30, 1991.

Sally: You know, a few years back it seems to me that I could always look around the school and find one group or another that were putting down someone because they were trying something new and innovative. And this year, especially, I guess I want to contribute it to the discussions at the faculty meetings, now people are receptive to hearing new ideas instead of sitting there, you know, I'm going to judge this one. It looks like people are getting excited hearing what other people do and are not being defensive about it.

Peg: It has been fun to go back in my journal from the beginning and look at feelings and attitudes and how they have changed. Not just my feelings and attitudes, but being able to see other people on the faculty and how they have reacted and responded to something that has happened. I might have commented on someone in the first meeting and then later another comment and it's like, oh, maybe that person is beginning to change some.

Sally: We became more of a team this year than we've ever been.

In summary, as Sally's last comment suggests, a team spirit or collegial culture was beginning to replace the norms of isolation at Southside.

Implications and Conclusions

The on-going research at Southside Elementary has identified a school culture dominated by seclusion, separation, and isolation. As evidenced by the stories of Pam and Kit, this school culture is embedded in a larger "culture of teaching" that socializes new teachers to conform with norms of isolation and seclusion. Together, Southside's culture and culture of teaching are in direct conflict with the need expressed by female teachers to "connect" with their peers.

From the epistemological perspective of Belenky and her coauthors (1986), a culture of isolation and separation fosters not only teacher silence, but received, subjective, and procedural

ways of knowing. Such a culture of schooling is reflective of the Western tradition, valuing attributes associated with the masculine—autonomy and independence. Of little or no value become "the development of interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought" (Belenky, et. al, p. 7) Yet, these attributes are valued by women and essential to "overcoming epistemic dualisms conditioned by procedural knowledge and assuming the power to construct knowledge" (Helle, 1991, p. 54).

As such, from a critical theorist perspective, women have been prevented from becoming constructed knowers. The culture of isolation has served to perpetuate the patriarchal nature of schooling, keeping women, who compose the majority of elementary education teaching force, from becoming empowered and having a voice in educational reform movements and change efforts. It may be that not until a school culture is changed to one of collegiality will teachers become empowered to create and sustain educational change in their classrooms.

A culture of collegiality requires the creation of spaces for teachers voices to be heard at the school level, for language does not "signify an authoritative replica of an external reality; rather language is a way of fostering cooperation and common endeavor" (Helle, 1991, p. 54). In this study this was accomplished by reconceptualizing faculty meetings. Teachers organized heterogeneous grade level groups of four faculty members each that met during a portion of faculty meetings to engage in dialogues of teaching ideas and professional issues. Witherell and Noddings (1991) contend that it is through dialogue that individuals can develop "a relation, or connective, notion of the self, one that holds that the self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relations with others" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 5). When teachers are given the opportunity to engage in dialogue with peers, a culture of collegiality and caring can be created and sustained.

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